

PLEASE KEEP

MINISTRY OF



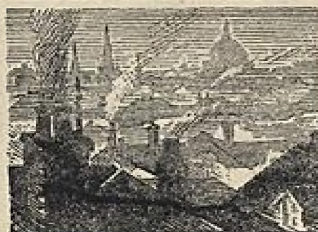
AGRICULTURE

ALLOTMENT &

# Garden Guide

VOL. 1 No. 11

NOVEMBER - 1945



"No warmth, no cheerfulness, no healthful ease,  
No comfortable feel in any member,—  
No shade, no shine, no butterflies,  
no bees,  
No fruits, no flowers, no leaves, no birds—November!"

NOVEMBER may not be as gloomy as Tom Hood—who sang the Song of the Shirt—has painted it; but it has never been a popular month, least of all to gardeners. For the perennial border may look bedraggled and the vegetable plot untidy and a bit sombre. We may have some promising looking beds of winter greens to reassure us that there will be no hungry gap in the early part of next year. But we shall miss the colour and interest associated with our runner beans and peas, our beet and carrots; while our fruit trees will be "bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

We shall miss the bees—our pollinating allies. We shall miss the butterflies—at least the beautifully coloured sorts. There is nothing to fear from them: in fact, some of them are beneficial: for instance, the Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral and Peacock thrive on stinging nettles. But we shall be glad to see the back of that beastly pest the "Cabbage White" butterfly, for this year saw the biggest invasion from the Continent since 1940, and one Lincolnshire schoolboy of eleven alone killed about 3,700 with a branch of a bush.

Well, there's very little we can do this month about the vegetable

plot, except to do a spot of tidying up; ordering our farmyard manure—if we are lucky enough to have a source of supply—and getting on with digging such bare land as there

may be; and checking up on our stored crops to make sure they are keeping well. But given the right sort of weather we can do some useful work on the fruit plot.

## ***Cleaning up***

Now is the time of the year for a little bit of "garden hygiene." A bit high falutin' that term? Well, it simply means keeping the garden clean. Cleanliness, we are told, is next to godliness, and that applies to gardens and allotments as well as to persons. An unclean body—inside or outside—is asking for trouble of some sort, and an unclean vegetable plot means harbouring pests and encouraging disease. Pests and diseases have to winter somewhere, and if they don't find their quarters in cracks in the wall or the fence or on trees or shrubs, they may take them up on those beansticks that ought to have

been put away for another season, or in the rubbish pile, or among those decaying brassica leaves. So let's have a good clean up and make things tidy, putting all suitable waste on the compost heap and burning all the rest. Don't forget that the ash contains potash and should be stored away in some dry place for future use.

And when you can, stir up the soil by hoeing between the plants still on the plot, for later on this will not be feasible and it is important that you should let the air and what sun there is get into the soil to make it warm and in better condition for the roots. Weeds may have to be kept down by hand weeding; they must not be allowed to compete with your food plants.



USE SUITABLE  
WASTE FOR  
COMPOST

BURN OTHER REFUSE OVER TRENCH  
-COLLECT ASH & STORE IN DRY PLACE



## ***That early DIGGING***

Does early digging pay? Well, many of us allotment holders and gardeners were pretty late in starting our gardening offensive this year and have been trying to catch up ever since. Perhaps because of a late start we sowed our onions too late and have regretted it. If we get a wet sticky winter—or our land is frost or snow-bound for many weeks, we may well regret later on that we didn't make a start with our digging in the late autumn when we had a chance to

get out on the plot. Of course, on really well-cropped gardens and allotments there won't be much bare ground we can dig at this time of year. But we can tackle the bare spaces from which we have taken our potatoes, runner beans, carrots and turnips.

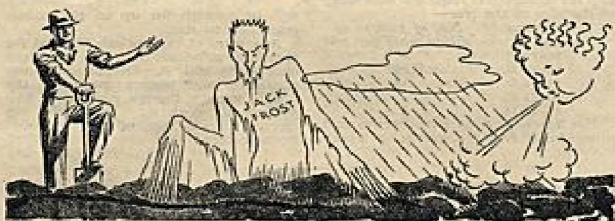
To the "digger" with a clay or very heavy soil, early digging is a necessity. On sandy or very light soil it is less important. Turning up the heavy stuff and leaving it rough gives Nature

the chance to do her work; frost, wind and rain work on the heavy lumps, making them loose and friable—easily crumbled—and so much easier to work when sowing and planting time comes along.

When digging the heavy land, work in plenty of humus—making material such as strawy manure—if you are lucky enough to have it—or compost, that will help to make the soil lighter, warmer and better aerated. On the light soils it is not usually wise to dig in manure at this time of year, since there is a danger that much of the plant food it contains will be washed to lower levels by the winter rains and so be lost to the plant.

Many of us are now worried about

the problem of keeping our land fertile and in good heart, after flogging it for years during the war. We can't expect to get much manure, if any, from farmers, who likewise have their fertility problems. Our only solution is compost. If we have not already realised this, we can now start a compost heap, for there should be plenty of material available, especially fallen leaves. The way to make compost was described in an earlier guide (March), so it will not be repeated here. If you need further information, you can still get a free Dig for Victory Leaflet No. 7—"How to make a Compost Heap" from the Ministry at Berri Court Hotel, St. Annes, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs.



## Facts about WEEDS

Gardeners may argue about whether weeds or pests are their chief headache. Pests we have dealt with pretty fully in earlier Guides and it may not be out of place here to say a few words about weeds, for a wet autumn may have brought us another crop, though we kept our plots fairly clean all summer. Now we may be doing a bit of digging we can dig in the annual weeds, but we must be careful to dig up and burn such perennials as dandelions, bindweed, thistles, docks and couch. Most gardeners know the serious objections to weeds, but for those who don't, here they are. Weeds absorb from the soil moisture and plant food that would otherwise nourish and increase the vegetable or fruit crop. They crowd the crop and keep from it the sunlight so essential for healthy growth; they prevent the air circu-

lating freely among the plants, and they harbour and favour insect pests and fungus diseases.

But as a writer in *The Times* said nearly forty years ago, "Many a casual gardener owes what success he has largely to the accident of weeds. They demand the use of the hoe; and the more soils and plants are studied, the more manifest does it become that a friable, well-worked surface is the prime secret of cultivation, even in the case of things that grow deep."

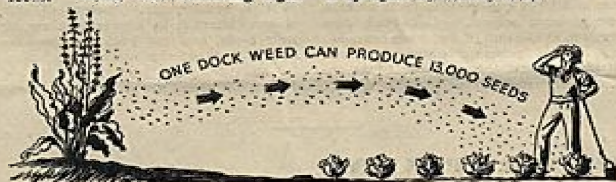
The most obvious way to suppress weeds is to stop them seeding. And what trouble we should save ourselves if we did—and if all our neighbours did likewise! For many weed plants produce several thousand seeds. And the seeds of many weeds do not all germinate at the same time and may



lie dormant in the soil and come up after many years. A single dandelion flower turns to about 170 seeds, but an established three-year-old plant produces nearly 5,000 seeds. But the groundsel beats that figure by 1,000. The pretty little blue-flowered Bye-bright can score 5,000, though the common dock easily beats that, for a fair specimen can easily carry 13,000 seeds. Hence the everlasting fight

against weeds with hand and hoe and weed-killer.

On the other hand, on light soils, from which plant food is washed away by autumn and winter rains, it is a good plan to let annual weeds grow on patches from which crops have been lifted and are remaining bare for some time. The weeds take up the plant food and store it; and when they are dug in in the spring, they give it up again by rotting away.



## Checking up on **STORED CROPS**

In November, and right throughout the winter for as long as they last, look, from time to time, at your crops in store to make sure they are keeping in good condition. First, the things you can easily get at—the shallots and onions. You may find that some of your shallots have gone soft or have started growing again. This may be due either to faulty drying or to bad storage conditions: the atmosphere may be too moist or hot. Look at every bulb, removing any that have gone bad. Use first those that have begun to grow. Put the rest away in a cool, dry place protected from the frost.

If for similar reasons some of your onions are starting to sprout, they need not be considered a total loss, for they will at least provide a useful supply of fresh green tops, if handled in the right way. If you've got a greenhouse or frame, you could set the "sprouters" in a box of dry sand or ashes and encourage them to grow

on. Or they will grow on the window sill indoors. And don't forget to use first your bull-necked onions or those that weren't properly ripened.

Your tomatoes in store may also be a bit of trouble. They may be ripening too fast or not ripening at all. Or some may have gone rotten through being stored with split skins. Those that are ripening too quickly can be held back a bit by putting them in a cooler place (but not below 50°F). The backward fruits could be put for a time on the window-sill or into a warm, airy cupboard.

Your parsnips will be all right left in the ground until early March, when you can lift those that remain and store them by burying in soil or sand in a shed or outhouse, to check them from starting into growth again. But have a look at your beet, carrots and turnips in store and take out any showing signs of rot. Small lots of potatoes in sacks or boxes should also be "vetted"; those in clump or pie

are more difficult to inspect and must run some risk, though if you examine them well before clamping—and built

the clamp properly—you can afford to rest content. Never open up a clamp in frosty weather.



## Eking out those **WINTER GREENS**

Here are a few hints that may help to eke out your supplies of winter greens on the plot. While you still have late cabbages of your own growing, or you can still buy a fairly good selection of vegetables, leave your own kales, sprouting broccoli and savoys for as long as you can, so narrowing the gap until next season's crops begin to come in. With kale, cut the top of the plant first for consumption. The stem pushes out short shoots that should be picked off for use, and this encourages other shoots to grow and provide supplies until quite late April or even into May. The sprouting broccoli shoots are made at the point where the leaves join the stem, and as these are picked further shoots are made that keep things going for quite a long time.

Don't be tempted to lift your leeks too soon just to make variety in your diet; leave them to grow, for they will keep quite well where they are until March or April, when you may be glad of them.

Some war-time gardeners seem to be doubtful whether the tops of Brussels sprout plants make good eating. They do—at the right time. But it's not wise to cut them at this time of the season because they are necessary to the plant's growth and

in severe weather will protect the sprouts below. March is quite early enough for Brussels tops.

Spinach beet should be allowed to rest now so that it can gather strength for next spring's push. Clear the plants of leaves at the last picking, and "pick" the stems rather than cut them, since a broken end seems better able to resist the downward spread of rot than if you cut it.

### PICK SPINACH BEET—DON'T CUT IT



Spinach beet is pretty hardy, but a severe winter can put paid to it. So if the weather looks like being hard, give the stripped plants some protection, such as straw or bracken.

### USE STRAW OR BRACKEN



## Work on the **FRUIT PLOT**

The value of the fruit we can grow in our own gardens needs no emphasis at this critical time. And we can grow more and better fruit if we give more attention to pruning and spraying at the right times. With much less to do on the vegetable plot, we can turn our hands to the fruit plot and get going. In so many private gardens

pests and diseases play havoc with the fruit and we can do much to control them by spraying. But first, here are a few hints about winter pruning, though you would get a better idea of the art by watching some knowledgeable person do the job a time or two.

### WINTER PRUNING

Before beginning to prune apples and pears, look for two kinds of shoots—"leaders" and "laterals," and two kinds of buds—"fruit buds" and "wood buds."

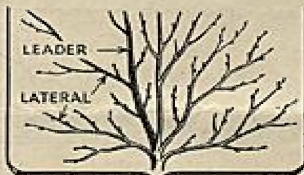
"Leader" shoots are the main shoot growths that extend at the ends of the branches; "laterals" are the side shoots that grow out from the "leaders." The "wood buds" that form leafy shoots are thin and pointed, while the "fruit buds" that form blossoms are plump and round (see illustrations).

Cordon and dwarf bush trees are pruned by cutting back all laterals to three or four buds (see illustrations) and cutting the leaders so as to leave two-thirds of the current season's

growth. Make the cut just above an outside bud. The right and wrong ways of making these cuts are shown in the pictures. If you are planting new trees this winter, pruning is best left until the buds begin to swell. Then cut all laterals back to four or five buds and reduce leaders by half.

Don't prune stone fruits unless absolutely necessary, owing to the risk of disease. In fact, plums and damsons need very little winter pruning. Dead wood should be removed, and any branches or shoots that cross or crowd should be thinned out.

Gooseberries and redcurrants can be pruned now. Winter pruning of gooseberry bushes consists of thinning



FRUIT BUD



WOOD BUD



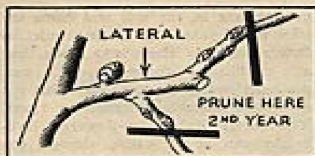
RIGHT



WRONG







out overcrowding shoots, especially in the middle of the bush, so letting in air and light and making fruit picking easier next season. Cut back new growth at the end of the main branches to a bud pointing outwards about halfway down. But if the birds are unusually troublesome in your district

and peck at the buds, leave pruning until spring.

With redcurrants, shorten all side shoots (laterals) in winter to three or four buds, and cut back the growths at the ends of the main branches to an outside bud, leaving about six inches of new growth each year.

## WINTER SPRAYING

Thorough spraying at the right times is probably the most important step you can take towards more and better fruit. Spraying in winter kills the eggs of Aphides (Greenfly), Apple Sucker, Red Spider, Capsid Bug and Winter Moths. Between the beginning of December and the end of January, you should spray your apples and pears once, either with a tar-oil spray ( $\frac{1}{4}$  pint tar-oil to 1 gallon water) if Aphides or Apple Sucker are the troublesome pests, or with Dinitro-cresol petroleum oil (D.N.C. for short) if the other pests mentioned also need to be controlled. D.N.C. can be applied as late as the first half of March.

With plums and damsons, spray as for apples up to the middle of January. Don't delay until after the end of January or the crop may be seriously affected. Spraying time for gooseberries is up to the middle of January and for blackcurrants up to the end of that month.

So you will see that by choosing a date between early December and mid-January you could spray your apples, pears, plums, blackcurrants and gooseberries at one go.

Here are some important spraying points to bear in mind—

- \* Don't alter the proportions recommended for making up the sprays. Stronger mixtures may do more harm than good; weaker sprays may not be effective.
- \* Mix and strain all sprays thoroughly before use. A piece of coarse muslin makes a good strainer.
- \* Spray thoroughly; every part of the tree or bush must be drenched, especially the twigs.
- \* Don't spray in the rain, when rain is likely, or during frosty or windy weather.
- \* Cover any vegetable crops under



or near the trees, to prevent damage when using tar-oil or D.N.C. sprays; spring cabbages, for instance, are spoiled by the spray. Failing anything better, use newspapers.

\* Take care not to damage flowering plants and hedges, especially your neighbour's, over the fence; if accidentally sprayed, they should be thoroughly washed with clean water, using the garden hose before the spray has time to dry.

\* Wash the spraying equipment after use.

\* Don't make up more spray than you need for a day's work.

The quantity of spray needed will, of course, vary with the number and size of your trees and bushes. For fruit trees, here is a table showing the average quantities required according to the size of the tree—

<i>Diameter of spread of tree</i>	<i>No. of gallons of dilute wash per tree</i>
10-12 ft.	1
12-15 ft.	1½
15-18 ft.	2½
18-21 ft.	3
21-24 ft.	4

For blackcurrants, gooseberries and other bush fruit, 1 gallon of spray



will be enough for up to 10 bushes, according to size.

Any form of syringe can be used for spraying, provided that you can reach every twig with it. Or you could use a stirrup and bucket pump of the A.R.P. variety, though you'll need two persons to work it. For really big trees, a barrow type of sprayer would be necessary.

## WINTER MANURING

Because conditions vary from district to district, even from garden to garden—manuring advice must be fairly general, and these notes deal only with what can be done at this time of year. Fruit trees and bushes, like vegetables, need fertilisers—and in the right proportions; for instance, nitrogen is needed to make shoots and leaves, though too much of it will produce rank growth but little fruit. If your apples and pears are not so vigorous as they should be, they can be encouraged by dressing the ground around the trees in winter with hoof-and-horn at the rate of 3-4 oz. per square yard. Alternatively, sulphate of ammonia, applied in early spring at the rate of 1-2 oz. per sq. yd., will prove equally effective.

Apples and pears (not so much) need potash, especially on light soils. But that's difficult to come by and you may have to rely on wood ash from your bonfires. This should be

kept in a dry place until you apply it to the ground in April. And don't forget that your gooseberries would like as much wood ash as you can give them; if there's any to spare the redcurrants and raspberries would appreciate it. Blackcurrants don't need it so much.

Every second winter give your plums a dressing of 2-3 ozs. of bone meal.

Don't forget at this time of year to fork lightly over the ground around fruit trees and bushes. But be careful about the raspberries: their roots are near the surface and they don't like being disturbed.

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